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FOR OES NANCY POWELL
USDA FOR FAS/OA, FAS/DLP, FAS/ICD AND FAS/ITP
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E.O. 12958: N/A
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SUBJECT: FEB 22 NIGERIA AVIAN FLU UPDATE

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11. (SBU) Summary. The GON announced Feb. 21 that AI has been confirmed in an eighth state, Gombe State. The Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) said Nigeria has 170 surveillance sites nationwide where the disease is most likely to be encountered, and the GON has tested more than 1,200 samples of suspected animal disease cases over the last few months. The GON continues considering how to offer compensation to bird owners. The Ministry of Agriculture has adopted a one-page checklist that will help local officials decide how suspect birds should be treated, but the approach of this checklist likely is too cautious and may need to be strengthened. End summary.

12. (U) Economic officer and U.S. Mission personnel attended on Feb. 22 an information session at the Government of Nigeria's (GON) Avian Influenza (AI) Crisis Management Center. A map dated Feb. 21 and issued by the Nigerian Animal Disease Information System showed the confirmed presence of AI (farms and wild birds) in eight states: Gombe, Bauchi, Katsina, Kano, Zamfara, Kaduna, the Federal Capital Territory, and Plateau. Gombe State was the new addition to this list.

13. (U) A GON official said Nigeria is implementing active and passive surveillance measures, and that any outbreak of AI should be reported to the World Organization for Animal Health within 24 hours. Nigeria has established 170 surveillance sites nationwide where the disease is most likely to be encountered, and the GON now has tested more than 1,200 samples of suspected animal disease cases over the last few months. The official explained that reports of concern will go to the state veterinary services, and then to the federal director of livestock and pest-control services. Kano State has 52 affected farms, while about 160,000 birds in the state have been affected.

14. (U) One participant cautioned that culling birds itself poses a threat, in that the persons and equipment involved in these operations can spread the virus if not sufficiently sterilized. A Nigerian official said the GON continues considering how to offer compensation to bird owners.

15. (SBU) During the meeting, the GON passed out a one-page,

primary-stage "decision tool for depopulation [culling] of poultry farms." The document was based on information provided by the European Commission's regional project on animal disease surveillance. The checklist, which includes six factors, is to guide on-the-ground "investigation team leaders" in the absence of laboratory results to enable them to conclude "beyond a reasonable doubt" that a suspicious incident is likely AI. According to the checklist, "Whenever three or more statements are true, you may make the decision to hand the responsibility for destocking (depopulation), decontamination (disinfection), and compensation to the appropriate state veterinary officer." Also, "If only one or two statements are true, you may not request to depopulate the farm, and you will keep the farm in quarantine until laboratory results are received or until further notice." In discussions afterward, a visiting U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) official told the USG officials present the GON should not give all six factors equal weight, and that considering AI's threat, the requirement for three "yeses" was too steep. CDC officials in Nigeria may ask the UN Food and Agriculture Organization in Abuja to approach the GON about strengthening these primary tripwires.

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